


State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

August 5, 2005

TO: Superintendents, Directors of Charter and State Operated Schools

FROM: Peter McWalters, Commissioner 

RE: Revision of School and District NCLB Accountability Plan

A written directive (attached) from Margaret Spellings, the U.S. Secretary of Education, has altered our state plans for determining the NCLB accountability status of schools. For Title I schools, this is a critical piece of information because it could affect the requirement to provide school choice, supplemental services or a restructuring plan going into the 2005-2006 school year. The change affects elementary and middle schools.

My memo to you on May 5, 2005, stated that "the classification status for all elementary and middle schools for the 2004-05 school year will be extended into the 2005-06 school year unchanged." **In effect, the communication from Secretary Spellings has modified this plan and instead requires us to determine the adequate yearly progress (AYP) of elementary and middle schools using only the school attendance rate for the 2004-05 school year.** We expect to complete this task by the end of August. To achieve adequate yearly progress, a school in Rhode Island must have an attendance rate (combining all grades) of 90 percent or must have improved its attendance rate according to the defined formula. (Schools ending with grades K, 1 or 2 will also be evaluated using the DRA reading score.)

Title I high schools "in need of improvement" will receive early NCLB performance classifications in late August and all high schools will receive their NCLB performance classification in early October for an appeals review period. The high school classifications use test scores from the New Standards Reference Exams taken in March 2005 (with additional checks on graduation rates, test participation rates and alternate assessment scores).

I request your patience as we review the implications of this federal directive for both the NCLB and State Progressive Support and Intervention systems. Please remember that Title I schools providing federally mandated consequences must meet AYP targets for two years before sanctions are not required. We anticipate that school districts will also need to be evaluated for adequate yearly progress, but we expect this to occur in early November when graduation rates become finalized and the school-level appeals process has been completed.

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THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20202

July 19, 2005

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

JUL 19 2005

U.S. DEPT. OF
EDUCATION

Honorable Peter McWalters
Commissioner of Education
State Department of Education
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Peter:

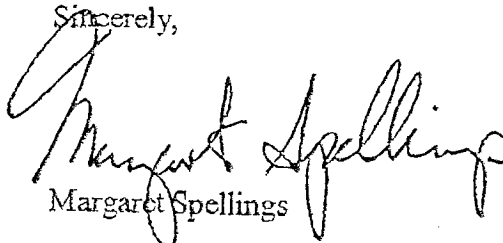
I am writing in response to the proposal submitted for the New England Common Assessment Program, which indicates the intent of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont to move from a spring testing schedule to a fall testing schedule while adopting the assessments required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

Previously, the Compact States administered grade-span assessments in the spring of each year. With the transition to testing in each of grades 3-8 in 2005-06, the Compact States will now administer these assessments in the fall of each year. Under the transition authority in section 4(c) of NCLB, the States in the Compact may make determinations of adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the 2004-05 school year for elementary and middle schools by using only "the other academic indicator" they have included in their State accountability plans. These decisions will affect school and district improvement status for the 2005-06 school year. The new assessments to be given this coming fall must be used for AYP determinations for the 2005-06 school year to identify elementary and middle schools, and their districts, for improvement for 2006-07. This transition has no effect on high schools; these schools will continue to receive AYP decisions based on graduation rates, participation rates, and the reading/language arts and mathematics assessments administered in spring 2005.

I appreciate your patience as we worked through the complexities of this proposal. Please be aware that if Rhode Island does not meet all NCLB requirements, as modified by the policy set forth above, the Department may consider taking enforcement action, including withholding of a portion of your Title I State administrative funds.

I am sending an identical response to the chief State school officers of New Hampshire and Vermont. I applaud your efforts to pool your resources to create a standards and assessment system that works for all three States.

Sincerely,


Margaret Spellings